

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI  
EASTERN DIVISION**

RICHARD YANG, )  
                        )  
                        )  
Plaintiff,         )  
                        )  
                        )  
v.                     )                              No. 4:09CV1669 MLM  
                        )  
                        )  
WILLIAM MCKINNEY, )  
                        )  
                        )  
Defendant.         )

**MEMORANDUM AND ORDER**

This matter is before the Court upon the motion of Richard Yang (registration no. 1037144), an inmate at Potosi Correctional Center, for leave to commence this action without payment of the required filing fee [Doc. #2]. For the reasons stated below, the Court finds that plaintiff does not have sufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee and will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$3.07. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1). Furthermore, based upon a review of the complaint, the Court finds that the complaint should be dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B).

**28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1)**

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1), a prisoner bringing a civil action in forma pauperis is required to pay the full amount of the filing fee. If the prisoner has insufficient funds in his or her prison account to pay the entire fee, the Court must assess and, when funds exist, collect an initial partial filing fee of 20 percent of the

greater of (1) the average monthly deposits in the prisoner's account, or (2) the average monthly balance in the prisoner's account for the prior six-month period. After payment of the initial partial filing fee, the prisoner is required to make monthly payments of 20 percent of the preceding month's income credited to the prisoner's account. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). The agency having custody of the prisoner will forward these monthly payments to the Clerk of Court each time the amount in the prisoner's account exceeds \$10, until the filing fee is fully paid. *Id.*

Plaintiff has submitted an affidavit and a certified copy of his prison account statement for the six-month period immediately preceding the submission of his complaint. A review of plaintiff's account indicates an average monthly deposit of \$7.50, and an average monthly balance of \$15.35. Plaintiff has insufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee. Accordingly, the Court will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$3.07, which is 20 percent of plaintiff's average monthly balance.

### **28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)**

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court must dismiss a complaint filed in forma pauperis if the action is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. An action is frivolous if it "lacks an arguable basis in either law or fact." *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 328 (1989). An action is malicious if it is

undertaken for the purpose of harassing the named defendants and not for the purpose of vindicating a cognizable right. Spencer v. Rhodes, 656 F. Supp. 458, 461-63 (E.D.N.C. 1987), aff'd 826 F.2d 1059 (4th Cir. 1987).

To determine whether an action fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, the Court must engage in a two-step inquiry. First, the Court must identify the allegations in the complaint that are not entitled to the assumption of truth. Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 129 S. Ct. 1937, 1950-51 (2009). These include “legal conclusions” and “[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action [that are] supported by mere conclusory statements.” Id. at 1949. Second, the Court must determine whether the complaint states a plausible claim for relief. Id. at 1950-51. This is a “context-specific task that requires the reviewing court to draw on its judicial experience and common sense.” Id. at 1950. The plaintiff is required to plead facts that show more than the “mere possibility of misconduct.” Id. The Court must review the factual allegations in the complaint “to determine if they plausibly suggest an entitlement to relief.” Id. at 1951. When faced with alternative explanations for the alleged misconduct, the Court may exercise its judgment in determining whether plaintiff’s conclusion is the most plausible or whether it is more likely that no misconduct occurred. Id. at 1950, 51-52.

## **The Complaint**

Plaintiff brings this action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against William McKinney, a doctor with Correctional Medical Services. Plaintiff seeks monetary and injunctive relief.

Leaving aside the conclusory allegations in the complaint, of which there are many, plaintiff alleges that defendant McKinney has not properly treated his chronic neck pain. Plaintiff claims that twenty years ago he was diagnosed with degenerative arthritis in his neck. Plaintiff says that he was previously diagnosed with severe compression of his spinal nerve roots. Plaintiff asserts that on September 11, 2004, he underwent disc replacement surgery for his C4, C5, and C6 intervertebral discs. Plaintiff states that his pain was relieved for several months but that in May 2005 he began experiencing pain on the left side of his neck and shoulder.

Plaintiff says that he began filing medical service requests on May 28, 2005. Plaintiff alleges that McKinney examined him, observed that he had full range of motion and fine motor control, and determined that neurological intervention was not warranted at that time. Plaintiff claims that McKinney subsequently prescribed him a full complement of pain relief treatments, including pain medications, analgesic balm, hot water massage, and amitriptyline. Plaintiff avers that McKinney also ordered X-

rays for plaintiff's neck on September 30, 2005, and February 27, 2009. Plaintiff states that McKinney's treatment regimen has failed to relieve the pain in his neck.

## **Discussion**

To state a claim for unconstitutional medical mistreatment, plaintiff must plead facts sufficient to indicate deliberate indifference to serious medical needs. Estelle v. Gamble, 429 U.S. 97, 106 (1976); Camberos v. Branstad, 73 F.3d 174, 175 (8th Cir. 1995). To show deliberate indifference, plaintiff must allege that he suffered objectively serious medical needs and that defendants actually knew of but disregarded those needs. Dulany v. Carnahan, 132 F.3d 1234, 1239 (8th Cir. 1997). Medical malpractice alone is not actionable under the Eighth Amendment. Smith v. Clarke, 458 F.3d 720, 724 (8th Cir. 2006). To state a claim of deliberate indifference, "the prisoner must show more than negligence, more even than gross negligence, and mere disagreement with treatment decisions does not rise to the level of a constitutional violation." Estate of Rosenberg v. Crandell, 56 F.3d 35, 37 (8th Cir. 1995). Plaintiff's allegations show that he disagreed with McKinney's treatment regimen or, at most, that McKinney was negligent in giving care to plaintiff. The allegations do not, however, rise to the level of deliberate indifference. As a result, plaintiff's complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.

Accordingly,

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED** that plaintiff's motion to proceed in forma pauperis [Doc. #2] is **GRANTED**.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the plaintiff shall pay an initial filing fee of \$3.07 within thirty (30) days of the date of this Order. Plaintiff is instructed to make his remittance payable to "Clerk, United States District Court," and to include upon it: (1) his name; (2) his prison registration number; (3) the case number; and (4) that the remittance is for an original proceeding.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the Clerk shall not issue process or cause process to issue upon the complaint because the complaint is legally frivolous or fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or both.

Dated this 5th day of November, 2009.



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CAROL E. JACKSON  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE